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Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02
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AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 7816

LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINR PINS PINT PGOV EGEN GH
SUBJ: US/UK TALKS ON SOVIET ACTIVITIES AND GENERAL CONDITIONS IN GHANA

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR, BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND RESPECTIVE SENIOR STAFF MEMBERS DISCUSSED SOVIET INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY IN GHANA, PROSPECTS FOR UNION GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK. BOTH SIDES FELT THAT SOVIET MACHINATIONS DESERVE FURTHER STUDY BUT THAT COUNTERACTIONS ARE PRIMARILY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOG. WE SPECULATED THAT TRIPLE-DIGIT INFLATION MIGHT DERAIL HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG'S PLANS FOR A SMOOTH TWO-YEAR TRANSITION TO UNION GOVERNMENT. THE PARADOX OF HIGH PRICES FOR COCOA, BUT AN ACUTE SHORTAGE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE, WAS ALSO EXPLORED; THERE WAS AGREEMENT THAT STAGGERING SUMS ARE UNACCOUNTED FOR AND HAVE PROBABLY BEEN DIVERTED BY GOG OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

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2. AMBASSADOR SMITH, BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER MILLS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE DEPUTIES, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OFFICERS, MET OCT. 7 IN AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE TO REVIEW SOVIET ACTIVITIES AND GENERAL CONDITIONS IN GHANA. SEVERAL ASPECTS OF SOVIET OPERATIONS DREW COMMENT: AMBASSADOR BERNOV'S RECENT PROMISES OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR GHANA (FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM MOSCOW, BERNOV CALLED ON HEAD

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OF STATE ACHEAMPONG SEPT. 23 AND REPORTEDLY OFFERED $1 MILLION IN AID, INCLUDING 4,000 TONS OF WHEAT AND EIGHT TRACTORS, AS "A CONTRIBUTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ENSURE AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF FOOD TO THE NATION"); THE SIZE OF THE SOVIET INTELLIGENCE STAFF (SIX KNOWN INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS AND FOUR SUSPECTS); THE OVERALL GROWTH OF THE SOVIET MISSION (24 NEW POSITIONS IN 1977, OSTENSIBLY TO RECLAIM NKRUMAH-ERA AID PROJECTS FROM THE BUSH); AND COVERT ACTION OPERATIONS IN THE FORM OF AGENTS OF INFLUENCE, FRONT

ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-ATTRIBUTABLE PROPAGANDA. BOTH SIDES FELT THAT IN RECENT YEARS THE USSR HAS BEEN LOOKING AT GHANA AS A MORE ATTRACTIVE TARGET. HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO CONSENSUS ON THE REASONS WHY THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE ATTACHING GREATER IMPORTANCE TO THIS COUNTRY. SEVERAL HYPOTHESES WERE ADVANCED:

-- THEIR PRESENT FRIENDS IN WEST AFRICA ARE GENERALLY MARGINAL STATES WITH LIMITED ECONOMIC BASES AND THUS THE SOVIETS WANT TO GET ON BETTER TERMS WITH GHANA, A POTENTIALLY MORE PRESTIGIOUS COUNTRY.

-- THE SOVIETS FEEL GHANA WAS "TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM AND THEY WANT IT BACK".

-- THE USSR IS SEEKING GREATER LEVERAGE HERE TO GIVE
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THE CHINESE A BLACK EYE, TO REPEAT THEIR SUCCESSES OF THE NKRUMAH ERA, TO SUBVERT THE REST OF WEST AFRICA, AND/OR TO CONTROL (THROUGH BARTER OR PURCHASE) GHANA'S COCOA, GOLD AND TIMBER AS AN AID TO THE SOVIET ECONOMY.

3. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE MOTIVES WAS INCONCLUSIVE BUT BOTH SIDES FELT THAT THE SUBJECT REQUIRES FURTHER STUDY AND MORE FREQUENT REPRESENTATIONAL CONTACTS WITH SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN ACCRA TO ADD MORE PIECES TO THE PUZZLE. THERE WAS AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, THAT DESPITE THE SOVIETS' ASSETS IN GHANA, THEY ARE OFTEN HINDERED BY THEIR OWN CLUMSINESS AND HAM-HANDED APPROACHES TO GOG OFFICIALS. FOR THIS REASON, THEY STILL HAVE A LONAG WAY TO GO TO GAIN RESPECTABILITY IN THIS COUNTRY. THUS, ON BALANCE, NEITHER WE NOR THE BRITISH BELIEVE SOVIET MACHINATIONS IN GHANA REQUIRE COUNTERACTIONS BY OUTSIDE FORCES AT THIS TIME. THE RESPONSIBILITY IS AND MUST REMAIN WITH THE GOG. WE ALSO NOTED THAT HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG AND MANY SENIOR GHANAIAN OFFICIALS ARE AT LEAST OUTWARDLY ANTI-COMMUNIST AND PROFESS OPPOSITION TO SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN AFRICAN OR GHANAIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

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4. A RELATED ISSUE WAS ALSO REVIEWED. WHILE SOME COVERT SOVIET EFFORTS ARE KNOWN TO GOG SECURITY AND DIPLOMATIC OFFICIALS, THEY ARE VIEWED BY GHANAIANS AS PART OF EAST/WEST CONFRONTATION AND NOT AS AFFECTING GHANA DIRECTLY. AT WORKING LEVELS, THE GOG APPEARS COMPLACENT AND CONFIDENT IT CAN CONTROL SOVIET DEPREDATIONS. A SIMILAR COMPLACENCY WAS NOTED IN HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG'S BELIEF THAT HE CAN REHABILITATE LEFTIST

POLITICANS FROM THE NKRUMAH ERA, USE THEM TO SUPPORT HIS PROPOSED UNION GOVERNMENT, AND THEN RELEGATE THEM TO THE SIDELINES AGAIN -- ALL WITHOUT ANY DANGER TO HIS OWN POSITION OR TO GHANA'S SECURITY.

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AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
R
DTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2429
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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5. REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON UNION GOVERNMENT WAS DISCUSSED IN PASSING BUT NOT IN DETAIL SINCE THE TEXT WAS NOT AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, WE FELT THAT TRIPLE-DIGIT HYPERINFLATION MIGHT EASILY DERAIL THE GOG'S PLANS TO INSTALL A NEW UNION GOVERNMENT IN JULY 1979. HIGH COMMISSIONER MILLS FELT THAT AS THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC FORTUNES SLIPPED FURTHER, ACHEAMPONG MIGHT HAVE TO TURN TO REPRESSIVE MEASURES TO KEEP THE POPULATION IN LINE. LOOKING AT THE CONTINUING PARADOX OF HISTORICALLY HIGH PRICES FOR COCOA, GHANA'S CHIEF EXPORT, BUT ACUTE SHORTAGES OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE IN THE COUNTRY, WE CONCLUDED THAT STAGGERING SUMS -- POSSIBLY HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS --

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ARE UNACCOUNTED FOR AND HAVE PROBABLY BEEN DIVERTED
BY GOG OFFICIALS. (THIS SUBJECT WILL BE EXPLORED
IN SEPTEL.) LOOKING FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD, IT APPEARED
TO US THAT GHANA'S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS ARE NOT BRIGHT:
COCOA PRICES ARE LIKELY TO FALL AS PRODUCTION FROM NEW
PLANTINGS OUTSIDE GHANA COME ON STREAM OVER THE NEXT FEW
YEARS, AND THIS WILL APPRECIABLY REDUCE THE APPROXIMATELY
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$900 MILLION GHANA EXPECTS TO EARN FROM COCOA EXPORTS
THIS YEAR.

6. TWO BACKGROUND PAPERS ON RECENT SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN
GHANA, PREPARED BY US AND HIGH COMMISSION FOR THE OCT. 7
MEETING, ARE BEING SENT BY AIRGRAM. SMITH

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TAGS: PINR, PINS, PINT, PGOV, EGEN, GH, US, UK, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
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Review Markings:
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22 May 2009
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